

How Do We Shift Power to the People and Away from Concentrated Corporate Power?

Education, Organization and a Culture of Resistance Will Build an Independent Movement for Real Change

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, December 23, 2010

[ProsperityAgenda.US](#) 23 December 2010

The power of concentrated corporate capital was on display in Washington last week, as it has been all year. The incoming Chair of the Congressional committee responsible for banking regulation, [Rep. Spencer Bachus \(R-AL\) says](#) “my view is that Washington and the regulators are there to serve the banks.” And, President [Obama sat down with the CEOs of 20 large corporations](#) to talk about how he could help Big Business increase their already record profits. And, in the Supreme Court, [13 of 16 business cases were ruled in favor of business interests](#).

These actions echo a year where Sen. Durbin complained the [banks “own” the Congress](#) and where President [Obama worked with the health insurance](#) industry to keep them in control of health care while claiming it was “reform,” and where the Supreme Court in [Citizens United](#) vastly increased corporate power in elections by allowing unlimited spending.

Corporate capital dominates the government and prevents the changes urgently needed in so many crisis issues for the nation and the world.

In the last year, through [Prosperity Agenda](#) I worked on many of these critical issues including the impact of corporate power on elections, providing health care to all Americans, restructuring finance regulation to prevent another economic collapse and reigning in spending on weapons and war. In all of these areas we had some impact, but in 2011 and beyond, much more will be needed.

Shifting power from concentrated corporate interests to the people is no easy task. It has taken years of work by those interests to gain the power that they have. It will take years of work to weaken the corporate stranglehold. The growing crises remind us of the urgency of our work and the need for a commitment to sustain and increase our efforts.

In preparing this article I looked back at a [memo written by Lewis Powell](#) two months before he was nominated to the Supreme Court by President Nixon. The memo was written in 1971 at a time when the business community felt it was rapidly losing power and that the capitalist system was under severe attack. Powell, a lawyer for the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, described as “the fundamental premise” of his paper that “business and the enterprise system are in deep trouble, and the hour is late.” They saw attacks coming in the colleges, in the media, on the streets, in bookstores and from politicians. Everywhere they looked they were under attack and on the verge of total defeat - the end of free markets and crony capitalism.

The purpose of the Powell memo, written to the head of the Chamber of Commerce, was to lay out a plan to restore and build corporate power. Powell laid out a plan that is instructive for those of us who want to shift power from concentrated capital to the people, who want to see a democratized economy in which people have greater control of their economic lives and are more represented in both the economy and government.

Powell's plan was a long-term one built primarily on education and organization. In response to a "broadly based and consistently pursued" attack on corporate power, Powell wrote "independent and uncoordinated activity by individual corporations, as important as this is, will not be sufficient. Strength lies in organization, in careful long-range planning and implementation, in consistency of action over an indefinite period of years, in the scale of financing available only through joint effort, and in the political power available only through united action and national organizations." He urged action in universities, with speaker's bureaus, in publishing, influencing the media and working in the courts, as well as in electoral politics.

We also have a long term plan to educate, organize and unite our efforts:

- We've used education in writing, media and video. We strive for but do not rely on the corporate media, which is also part of the problem, to cover our work. We also recognize that too often they are part of the problem. We make our own media and work with the independent media.
- We've reached out to allied organizations and allied movements in order to help develop consistent and coordinated actions. And we've asked our thousands of members to take actions in unison so our voices are multiplied.
- We've used the courts and instruments of government to challenge the illegal actions of the [Chamber of Commerce](#) and Karl Rove's [American Crossroads](#) seeking investigation and prosecution of their abuses in the 2010 elections. See more [here](#), and [here](#). We've done the same when we seek corporate responsibility for companies like Massey Energy and their CEO [Don Blankenship](#) when 29 miners were killed in West Virginia. More [here](#) and were pleased when he [resigned](#).

While education and organization are critical ingredients to bringing change, this is a slow process and many of the issues the nation faces are urgent. This is why we also pursue acts of protest and resistance. We did this in the [health care debate](#) and most recently in the [anti-war movement](#). Resistance has always been an ingredient for bringing change whether it was people sitting in at segregated lunch counters, or blacks sitting in the white section of the bus, or Cindy Sheehan camping outside of George Bush's ranch. In the next year we will see a growing culture of resistance in the United States.

Other acts of resistance are seen around the release of documents by WikiLeaks. The reaction demonstrated corporations and the government working together to block the American people from knowing what is being done in our name. VISA, Mastercard, Bank of America, PayPal, Amazon and various financial institutions stopped processing funds for WikiLeaks at the request of the government. But the truth is getting out and we now know what the government is doing in our name and must take action to stop it. Knowing the truth and not acting is complicity. More and more Americans are acting. We see resistance in the more than 1,000 mirror sites of WikiLeaks, in the more than 100,000 people who downloaded the WikiLeaks "insurance policy" and were prepared to release documents if

Julian Assange were harmed. It is seen in Americans organizing for their right to know, and to reaffirm Freedom of the Press. We are organizing under the banner WikiLeaksIsDemocracy.org, with a petition signed by notables and now by thousands. Join us and urge others to do as well.

It is going to take education, organization and resistance as part of [a persistent independent movement for political change](#). Those who want real change achieve it by voting for parties dominated by the donations of corporate executives. Voting for corporate parties reinforces corporate power. We need independent electoral activity along with an independent movement and independent media to shift the power to the people.

There is a growing movement for real paradigm shifting change. It is a slow process than is accelerating and 2011 promises to be a milestone year. Please join us in our efforts at www.ProspertyAgenda.US. We need all Americans who want a democratized economy where power is shifted to the people joining us.

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